Inexperienced instructors in IAF

3854. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether inexperienced training instructors are manning IAF's flying training establishments;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the measures proposed to upgrade avionics equipment and provide experienced pilots for meaningful training?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) The flying instructors and senior flying supervisors posted to flying training establishments are carefully selected depending on their qualifications and experience. Before a pilot is posted as an instructor, he undergoes a rigorous 6 months course for flying instructional duties, followed up by upgradation of his category through written and flying examinations. In addition, constant checks are maintained to review the qualitative aspects of training.

(b) Not applicable in view of (a) above.

(c) Avionics upgrade is a constant process. The radio sets in Jet trainer Kiran Mk-I/IA are being upgraded for better quality output.

Regarding experienced pilots, requisite information is covered in part (a) above.

Soldiers killed in Siachen

3855. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Indian soldiers, killed in Siachen Glacier during the last three months; and

(b) whether Government propose to sanction additional compensation to the soldiers who are braving hostile enemy fire round the year to boost their morale?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Eight Indian soldiers were killed in Siachen area due to enemy action during the period from 1st April to 30th June 1998. There was no casualty due to weather conditions.

(b) In order to mitigate the hardships of the soldiers posted in Siachen area and to boost their morale, various measures have been adopted, which include, speedy rotation of troops, provisions of special extreme cold clothing items, appropriate shelters, modern communication system, and high calorie special diet. Besides this, a special allowance called Siachen Allowance has also been sanctioned as follows:—

(i) JCOs/ORs — Rs. 4667/-pm

(ii) Officers — Rs. 7000/-pm.

Self-reliance plan of DRDO

3856. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether in view of prevailing hostile environment and the urgent need for modernisation and re-equipment, vital role of DRDO in Defence R&D is presupposed;

(b) what steps Government propose for stepping up allocations to give requisite thrust to DRDO's efforts to speed up pace of 10 years self-reliance plan; and

(c) what will be the allocation in Ninth Plan for Defence R&D and its implementation through DRDO?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) The budgetary allocations to DRDO have been progressively increased from 4.90% of Defence budget in 1996-97 to 5.99% in 1998-99. Government are committed to provide adequate allocations to meet the requirements of various programmes of DRDO directed towards achieving the goals of 10 years' national mission for self-reliance in defence systems.